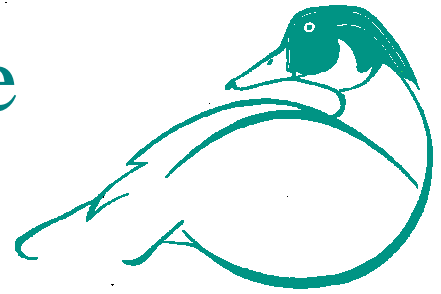


Cacapon Institute

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***Sign Up Now For 3rd Annual Oh Deer! Environmental Forum
Coming October 22, 2007***

“This was great! This was the hardest school work that I have done in my whole life.” 2005 Forum Participant

Cacapon Institute is currently enrolling high school classes for the Oh Deer! Environmental Forum. Students participating in this eForum explore the ecological, agricultural, and societal problems of ecosystems out of balance and then challenge one another across the internet to find socially and environmentally acceptable solutions. We designed the eForum to connect students with current, real-world issues. For teachers it offers a chance to bring outside perspective to the classroom. For conservationists it offers a platform to introduce their work to students with a curriculum base.

Oh Deer!

The actions of people dramatically affect the health of ecosystems and people in turn are dramatically affected by the ecosystem. In Oh Deer! students investigate the impacts of overabundant deer populations on forest health, agriculture, homeowners, hunters, and even the deer themselves. Students then challenge each other to find socially acceptable remedies. How big is the problem? Many foresters believe that deer populations denser than 20 per square mile are responsible for the lack of forest regeneration. In parts of the Mid-Atlantic region overpopulation has reached higher than 60 per square mile! In 1980, deer damage cost farmers \$35 million in West Virginia alone. Students will grapple with this complex issue and join a spirited debate to seek solutions relevant to their lives.

The eForum is open to more than just biology and environmental science classes. A vocational agriculture class might investigate the impacts of, and propose solutions for, the threat deer pose to agricultural and timber. A civics class could model the democratic decision making process. An English class could use the subject material to test their persuasive writing skills. The best consensus positions demonstrate an understanding of the interplay between stakeholder needs, scientific and political reality, and local, state and federal regulations. ***Multiple biology, English, vo-ag, science, or social studies classes from within one school are invited to team up, or compete, to develop the best solutions.***

**From the Cacapon to the Potomac to the Chesapeake Bay
We Protect Rivers and Watersheds Using Science and Education**

"Believe it or not this forum isn't just some stupid assignment your teacher decided to do because he/she didn't feel like making lesson plans...So, grow up a little and actually put forth your best ideas because who knows, Maybe it will be something that no one at Cacapon Institute has thought of yet..."

The Enigmatic Enviromentalists, Broadway High School, VA

The Potomac Highlands Watershed School hosts two eForums each year. Oh Deer! in the fall and the Stream Cleaner eForum in the spring. To see students' performance in the past eForums go to Cacapon Institute's "high school" and **click on the phone** at www.cacaponinstitute.org/high.htm.

Benefits of the Environmental Forum

The eForums offer students a range of learning experiences that push their critical thinking abilities and peer pressure encourages peak performance. The moderated dialogue sets students of many abilities and backgrounds in a virtual classroom to engage each and every one both as an independent learner *and* as a member of a group performing analytical thinking. The eForums meet curriculum requirements. They address:

- Ethical practices for science, resource management;
- Use of appropriate technology solutions;
- Application of models to make predictions;
- Research and explanation of how the political system influences decisions;
- The role citizens play in democratic decision making;
- Exploration of occupational opportunities in science and technology; huh?
- Engagement in the process of seeking consensus and issue resolution.

How the eForums Work

The eForum lasts approximately three weeks. The format is dynamic and flexible to meet the needs of many disciplines, teacher preferences, and class schedules. In addition to a broad range of links and reading material found on a typical web site, the Potomac Highlands Watershed School's eForums have four unique elements to broaden students' knowledge and engage them in environmental issues.

1. **Native Guides** – Real life experts provide letters telling their personal stories. These letters, intended for the high school audience, reinforce the background reading, slide shows, and links to scientific materials included in Oh Deer!
2. **Stakeholder Groups** – Students in each class are directed to form small stakeholder groups representing farmers, land owners, environmentalists, etc. and draft "Point Of View" position papers that are posted on the eForum's web page.
3. **Position Papers** – After the POVs are posted on the web, students in participating schools check out their peer's work, pose *Thoughtful Questions* to one another across the web, and refine their own positions.
4. **Final Consensus Plans** – After posting POVs, questioning their peers, and modifying their positions, students, as a class, then must balance the concerns of all the stakeholder groups to negotiate a consensus position that is acceptable to all.

Visit us on the web and follow the e-school link into the high school classroom at www.cacaponinstitute.org for "Sign up & Info". Or call Frank Rodgers at (304) 856-1385 or email us at ci@cacaponinstitute.org.

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